

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and updates on
Newfoundland and Labrador's
Intangible Cultural
Heritage Program

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The Festival On Fire!

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From the woodstove in the kitchen, to the St. John's Fire of 1892, to the annual lighting of bonfires on November 5th, fire has a firm place in the heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As part of a plan to explore that history, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador is organizing the second annual Newfoundland and Labrador Folklife Festival, celebrating fire and fire traditions in the province. Planned events for the Festival on Fire will surround one of the province's most colourful holidays.

Bonfire Night, traditionally held on or near November 5th, is a tradition that has seen a decline in recent years, in part due to worries about illegal fires. "There is an increasing concern about the decrease in Bonfire Night participation in the province," says Jarvis. "We would hate to see the tradition vanish, so we are looking to celebrate that particular aspect of our heritage, but also celebrate other fire-related traditions that do exist."

Many residents of Newfoundland and Labrador associate their earliest fire memories with Bonfire night. Other fire related traditions of interest to the foundation include things like blacksmithing, candle making, boil-ups, cooking and baking traditions, and the role of fire in the customs and ceremonies of many different cultures.

"We will be planning a series of events, talks and presentations around these traditions," says Jarvis.

In addition to this, the ICH office hopes to collect local memories and stories about Bonfire Night and fire-related traditions as part of its ongoing work with Memorial University's Digital Archives Initiative.

Any persons who have interesting stories or memories associated with Bonfire Night in Newfoundland and Labrador are encouraged to contact the ICH office through their website www.festivalonfire.ca or to call 1-888-739-1892.

Photo courtesy Sonya Piercey, Bonfire Night 2009, Grand Falls-Windsor

Doors Open St. John's and Petty Harbour Report 2010

By Melissa Squarey, Doors Open Coordinator

Well we are happy to report Doors Open 2010 was not deterred by the aftermath of Hurricane Igor. Although the effects of the storm ripped through the Eastern areas of the province Doors Open was a success. Only 2 of our 26 sites scheduled declined their participation in the event due to the storm. However, Memorial University's Botanical Gardens and the Petty Harbour Hydroelectric plant plan on participating in the coming year.



We are also happy to announce the addition of a new community to the Doors Open events schedule. There were a total of six sites in Petty Harbour on Saturday, Sept. 25th & Sunday, Sept. 26th which were open to the public free of charge. Of particular interest in the area was a storytelling circle that took place on Sunday, Sept. 26th at Chafes Landing. Doors Open was lucky to have Chris Brookes and Margaret Hitchens (*photo, left*) perform for free to Doors Open visitors. To conclude, despite the weather in St. John's and Petty Harbour Doors were Open all around and people gathered to enjoy some local events.

Register Your Bonfire Night Event

Compiling a list of bonfire night celebrations across the province is one part of the foundation's new Festival on Fire. We will be planning a whole series of events around Bonfire Night traditions, but to start, we want communities to contact us about any Bonfire Night events they already have planned.

Communities or local fire departments wishing to register supervised, official town bonfires should send the following information by Friday, October 22nd, 2010:

1. Name of Community
2. Location of Bonfire in the community
3. Start time and Date
4. Backup bad-weather date if applicable
4. Name/Contact information of official contact person.

Send information to:

Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador
 1 Springdale Street, 3rd Floor
 PO Box 5171, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada A1C 5V5
ichprograms@gmail.com
www.festivalonfire.ca
 Telephone: 1-888-739-1892 ext 3



Photo: Bonfire Night in Carbonear, 2008. Courtesy Margaret Ayad.

The Great Northern Peninsula Textile Project

By Lisa Wilson

Conche, Newfoundland lies at the end of a 25 km stretch of unpaved road—a road notorious for its potholes. Most people who brave the road to visit this Northern Peninsula out-port, can't help but feel awestruck by beauty of its natural surroundings. I was no exception. In fact, as I approached town for the first time, I had to pull over several times to take in the view.

That first drive was in early May, and looking out from Sailor Jack's Hill I could see several icebergs on the horizon, reddish under a setting sun. The first icebergs I had ever seen in person.

Continuing on my way, I then stopped to look at the old nursing station, a heritage building at the entrance of town. It stood tall against a coniferous backdrop, painted in light blue so to match its original colors. This building, which now houses the French Shore Interpretation Center, was about to become my work headquarters for the next two months.

My internship with the French Shore Historical Society was awarded to me through the Folklore Department at Memorial University, where I am currently studying for me master's degree.

The position looked challenging—the FSHS had developed an initiative to document and promote textile-based crafts that are being made on the Great Northern Peninsula. An objective born from the notion that fewer people nowadays are practicing textiles, and even fewer are handing down their skills. For my job then, I had to locate and interview people who engage in activities such as quilting, knitting, rug hooking, and seal-skin boot making.

My visit with Mary Jane Simmonds, for instance, began with me taking photos of her traditional-patterned socks and mittens. I then asked questions about when she learned to knit, why she likes to knit, what patterns she uses, and whether or not she thinks this skill in danger of disappearing. Like most other craftspeople I spoke with, she had much to share.

By early July, I had interviewed 45 craftspeople and taken over 2500 photos of handicraft items. My time was up, but I could have easily kept working. While some traditions are clearly in decline, others are going strong. It was a very inspiring for me to see this first-hand.

All of this fieldwork material will be added to the GNP Textile Archive and Learning Center in Conche, as a foundational collection.

Photos:

(top) 84 year old Mary Jane Simmonds, of Conche, sits and knits in her living room.

(bottom) A pair of double-knit diamond-patterned socks made by Mary Jane.



Pouch Cove Community Heritage Night

by Dale Jarvis, ICH Development Officer

On Tuesday, October 5th, I met with the Pouch Cove Heritage Committee to help figure out which stories, songs, photos and places could be saved as part of preserving and sharing Pouch Cove's heritage.

I was on hand to explain the importance of preserving history and heritage, and to help identify people, places, stories and things that are important for the community to save as part of its local heritage and culture. People shared stories about Christmas traditions, place names, the old fisheries buildings, and even a type of dance that people used to do called the Monkey Dance, which seemed to be a local version of the low-kicking Cossack-type dancing!



Former ICH Digital Archives Intern Jed Baker (*photo, left*) was on hand to demonstrate to the community the Pouch Cove Google map he has created, which will be used to mark places with important stories and photos. The organization will be scanning local historic photographs, and hopes to place many of them online.

The Pouch Cove Heritage Committee is a non-profit community association founded last year to help residents of Pouch Cove identify and protect local heritage. The Committee works independently from the Pouch Cove Town Council and has been set up as a separate incorporated society.

Check out the group's website at www.pouchcoveheritage.org

Baccalieu Trotters to take over The Ship Pub!

In 1992, Sheila Power of North River organized a St. Patrick's Day family concert, with the hope it would become a yearly occurrence for All Hallow's Parish. Thinking that the traditional Lancers would add to the concert, she went searching for local dancers who would show off their talents. The dancing was a great hit, and the group continued performing the Lancers for local concerts. Since 2009, the group has been meeting regularly and working on dances, under the guidance and direction of Power, with live music provided by accordionist Web Dawe. In the summer of 2010, the Baccalieu Trotters were one of the groups that took part in a traditional Newfoundland folkdance symposium in Old Perlican, as part of the Cupids 400 celebrations.

"We do this for fun but it is a great way to keep in shape," says Power. "It also keeps the Newfoundland music and traditional dance alive."

The Baccalieu Trotters will be the featured performers at the Folk Arts Society's weekly Folk Night at The Ship Pub on Solomon's Lane in St. John's on Wednesday, October 13th. The event starts at 9:30pm, and is \$5 at the door.

